

Recommendations for Nail Salon Customers

If you go to a nail salon for a pedicure, your feet may be soaked in a whirlpool footbath before your pedicure. There is a chance that soaking your feet in the footbath may cause skin infections on your feet and legs. This is due to an organism called mycobacteria.

Mycobacteria are found in soil and tap water, and don't usually cause infections. But they may be found in high numbers in the whirlpool footbaths used in nail salons unless the footbaths are cleaned and disinfected properly.

You can reduce your chances of getting these infections by following these steps:

1. **Do not shave your legs on the day you are going to get a pedicure.** The small nicks and cuts caused by shaving can increase the chances that the mycobacteria, if present in the water, will cause skin infections.
2. **Avoid using the whirlpool footbaths if you have any open wounds, cuts, or scratches on your feet or legs.** Open wounds and cuts can provide a way for the bacteria to get into the skin and cause infections.
3. **Ask whether the foot spas have been cleaned and disinfected.** The Division of Public Health and the Department of Regulations and Licensing have developed recommended cleaning and disinfecting steps that all nail salons should take to make sure the footbaths are safe for use. The use of properly cleaned footbaths will reduce the chances that you will get a skin infection after using them.
4. **Make sure your manicurist/pedicurist has washed his/her hands before touching your hands or feet.** Making sure their hands are clean is a good way to keep germs from spreading to your skin.
5. **If you do get sores on your feet or legs, and they aren't healing, see your doctor.** Tell him or her if you recently had a pedicure or a treatment with a whirlpool footbath.



Also see communicable disease fact sheet on [atypical mycobacteria](#).

References:

1. California Department of Health
2. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 2002; 346:1366-71. "An Outbreak of Mycobacterial Furunculosis Associated with Foot Baths at a Nail Salon."